

Music in Worship – Lesson 9

Instruments in Worship?

- Review
- What about instruments?
 - Are instruments allowed in worship? Commanded? Forbidden?
 - What do you think?
- Two incorrect arguments for using instruments
 - Instruments were used in the worship of God in the Old Testament. Therefore, we may use instruments in our worship.
 - First and primarily, this argument fails to recognize the distinction between OT and NT worship. Jesus told us that, with his life, death, and resurrection, worship was changed; we cannot simply assume that something from the OT worship carries over into the NT worship.
 - Also, this argument proves too much. The use of instruments was commanded under the OT (Num 10:10; 1 Chron 15:16, 23:5; 2 Chron 29:25); unless we are prepared to say that instruments are a requirement for proper worship of God under the NT, this argument must be rejected.
 - The New Testament never forbids the use of instruments in worship. Therefore, we may use instruments in our worship.
 - While it is true that instruments are never forbidden in NT worship, this argument ignores the Regulative Principle. It is not enough to establish that God does not specifically forbid something in worship, we must establish that God allows that thing in worship.
 - It is not that either of these arguments is wholly incorrect. Rather, neither argument is able to establish sufficient grounds for the use of instruments in worship. We will use the initial statements of both arguments in building the case that instruments are permitted in worship.
- Arguments against instruments in worship
 - The world/pagans/Roman Catholic Church uses instruments in their false worship. Therefore, since we are to be holy & set apart, we may not use instruments in worship.
 - Note: this appears to be an argument the early church used to reject instrumental music.
 - Many things that are commanded in worship are shared with the practices of false worship. Pagans sang hymns to their false gods, we are commanded to sing to the true God; the Roman Catholic mass is full of Scripture, yet we have no qualms about the use of Scripture in our worship.
 - Similarly, OT worship was full of items, symbols, and activities that were shared with the worship of the nations. Things such as the temple, animal sacrifices, feasts, singing, and even instruments were common between the worship God commanded and that of the Gentiles.
 - Statement from Northwest Church of Christ in Texas

“What surprises many people is that no where does the Bible authorize the church to worship God with a mechanical instrument of music. You can search through out the Bible and you will not find even one verse that authorizes the church of Christ to worship God with a mechanical instrument of music. There is no example or even a hint that the church of Christ you read about in the Bible ever worshiped God with mechanical instruments of music. The idea of the church worshiping God with a mechanical instrument of music was entirely unheard of!”

“It is a matter of historic record that the church of Christ did not use instrumental music in worship. ‘Let the pipe be resigned to the shepherds, and the flute to the superstitious who are

engrossed in idolatry. For, in truth, such instruments are to be banished from the [worship] . . . the one instrument of peace, the Word alone by which we honor God is what we employ. We no longer employ the ancient psaltery, and trumpet, and timbrel, and flute' (Clement of Alexandria, died 215 A.D.).”

“I have no objections to the instrument in our chapels, provided they are neither heard nor seen' (John Wesley, founder of the Methodists Church). . . . Charles Spurgeon, one [of] the greatest Baptist preachers ever, quoted 1 Corinthians 14:15 and added, 'I would as soon pray to God with machinery as to sing to God with machinery.'” – <https://www.northwestcofc.org/why-does-the-church-of-christ-not-use-mechanical-instruments-of-music-in-worship.html>

- These arguments are overstated, but they are nevertheless powerful. They show that historically, both in the early church and for quite some time among Protestants (including Baptists!), instruments were rejected in worship as contrary to Scripture.
- Rather than answer each point in this statement directly, we will simply build our argument that instruments are permitted in worship.
- The case for allowing instruments in worship
 - What would we expect?
 - Instruments were commanded in the worship of God in the Old Testament (Num 10:10; 1 Chron 15:16, 23:5; 2 Chron 29:25). Instruments are used in the worship of God in heaven (Rev 5:8-10, 14:2-3, 15:2-4).
 - Therefore, we can reasonably conclude that instruments in worship are not abhorrent to God. And if instruments in worship are not abhorrent to God and are used in dispensations other than the NT dispensation, we might expect that instruments would be used in NT worship.
 - However, this does not establish a warrant for using instruments in worship.
 - The use of instruments in worship is not forbidden under the NT. Since instruments in worship are not abhorrent to God and since God does not forbid us from using instruments in our NT worship of him, it would be surprising if we were not given warrant for their use.
 - But, this is still not sufficient grounds for the use of instruments in NT worship. All we have showed is that it is reasonable to expect God to allow instruments in worship. We still must have specific warrant for using them.
 - The example of singing the Psalms in New Testament worship
 - Almost every New Testament reference to singing in corporate worship speaks of the singing of psalms. While some psalms were sung *a capella*, others explicitly expect instrumental accompaniment (Ps 4:1, 55:1, 67:1, 76:1). Some even call for the use of instruments in worship (Ps 81:2-3, 98:4-6, 150:3-5).
 - I don't believe that this, in and of itself, is sufficient warrant for instruments in worship because the Psalms also expect and call for things that are forbidden in NT worship, for instance burnt offerings and animal sacrifices (Ps 20:1-3, 66:13-15). But Hebrews is clear that, since the final sacrifice has been offered, to return to offering sacrifices would be abhorrent to God, a rejection of his Son.
 - Just because something is expected in the Psalms (which we are told to sing) does not mean that we are necessarily told to or even allowed to do that thing. But since we are not forbidden from using instruments (as with animal sacrifices) and the Psalms expect the use of instruments, the fact that psalms were sung in New Testament worship is tentative ground for the use of instruments in worship.
 - The command to sing psalms in New Testament worship

- Paul commands us to sing psalms (Eph 5:19, Col 3:16). The technical meaning of the Greek word Paul uses (*psalmos*) is a song accompanied by a stringed instrument. While it is the contextual meaning of the word that is of most importance, words also carry implications.
- The word Paul used carries the implication that our singing would be accompanied by instruments.
- Paul's command to sing *psalmos* is further evidence that God allows for the use of instruments in worship.
- The command to “make melody”/”sing”
 - Three times Paul uses the Greek word *psallō* in reference to music in the assembly; twice in 1 Cor 14:15 and once in Eph 5:19.
 - 1 Cor 14:15 – “. . . I will sing praise with my spirit, but I will sing with my mind also.”
 - Eph 5:19 – “. . . singing and making music from your heart to the Lord . . .” (HCSB)
 - Strong defines *psallō* as “to twitch or twang, i.e. to play on a stringed instrument. . . make melody, sing (psalms).”
 - As with *psalmos*, Paul's use of *psallō* directly implies that musical instruments are used as part of our singing.
- The use of instruments by the Church in heaven
 - If the Church in heaven's singing is an argument that we on earth are to sing, then the use of instruments in heavenly worship is an argument that we may use musical instruments.
 - As I am not convinced that it is proper to directly appeal to the worship of the Church in heaven to establish what is right in the worship of the Church on earth, I do not place weight on this argument.
- Conclusion
 - The use of instruments in worship is not commanded in the New Testament and neither is it forbidden. However, in commanding us to sing in our worship, God permits the use of musical instruments to accompany our worship.
- Application
 - Because instruments are only permitted, not commanded, we must not allow them to overshadow or supplant the things in worship that are commanded such as congregational singing.

Hymnody in the Middle Ages, part 2 – AD 814-1400

- Last week we learned about the sequence and the trope which were both developments beyond basic Gregorian Chant. And we began to trace the development of church music from the late Medieval era to the pre-Reformation.
- Monophony – A music texture consisting of a single melody without accompaniment or chords. Can have multiple notes at once if they are all octave steps.
- Polyphony – A layering of notes in music so that there are two or more independent lines of notes played or sung at the same time. Not the same as harmony but related to it.
- Organum – Addition of new vocal lines to existing chants. Could be as simple as one new line or as complex as six lines.
- Léonin/Leoninus (ca. 1150-1201)
 - Composer, probably French, of church music. We know almost nothing about him. He is the earliest known church composer to use polyphony.

- Appears to have introduced polyphonic organum into Western sacred music. Mostly used two-part polyphony.
- Compiled the *Magnus Liber*, a collection of polyphonic music intended for use in worship services.
- Perotin/Perotinus (ca. 1170-1236)
 - Student of Léonin who further developed polyphony and used three and four parts in his music.
 - Is credited with seven compositions in the *Magnus Liber*.
- Waldensians – An ascetic movement that began in the late 12th century. Regarded by the Reformers as early fore-runners of the reformation. Declared heretical by Pope Innocent III in 1215. Preached the atonement of Christ and justification by his righteousness, voluntary poverty, and, possibly, the universal priesthood of believers. Joined themselves to the Reformation in 1532.
- Francis of Assisi (1182-1226)
 - Father was a wealthy Italian merchant; mother was a French noblewoman.
 - Lived a decadent, lavish lifestyle until an illness caused him to re-examine his life. He briefly returned to his former lifestyle but then renounced his family and fortune and became a wandering beggar.
 - Saw several visions; in one Christ told him to “repair my house.” Francis initially interpreted this as a command to rebuild the chapel St. Damiano’s which he did by gathering or begging stones and placing them himself.
 - Heard a reading from the Gospel of Matthew in which Christ commissioned the twelve. He began traveling the countryside preaching to the people without a license. He preached that “Christ is all.”
 - Founded the Franciscan Orders (three separate orders) which emphasized ascetic living, discipline, and preaching.
 - Wrote “Canticle of the Sun” (or “Praise of the Creatures”) in which he gave thanks to God for “Brother Sun, Sister Moon, Brother Wind, Water, Fire, and Earth” all of which gave praise to God. We sing a portion of this as “All Creature of Our God and King” (#36). Particularly important as the song was in the vernacular, Italian, not Latin (though it also included Latin).
- *Laudi Spirituali* – Vernacular sacred (but not liturgical) song. Very popular among the Franciscans.
- Flagellants – travelers who roamed Europe inflicting pain on themselves. Often sang *laudi spiriuali* and spread them across the continent.
- Carols – anonymous folk songs that celebrate a seasonal topic
- Thomas Aquinas (ca. 1227-1274)
 - Probably most significant theologian for the Roman Catholic Church but also influential among Protestants as well as in philosophy. Wrote *Summa Theologica* which is a lengthy explanation and defense of Christian doctrine.
 - *Pange lingua, gloriosi* (“Of the Glorious Body Telling”)
 - *O salutaris hostia* (“O Saving Victim”)
- From about the end of the 13th century until the 15th, there were no major developments in hymnody in the western Church. Further development of Latin hymnody did occur following the Reformation and Council of Trent, but we will not spend any significant time examining those developments.
- John Wycliffe (ca. 1328-1384)
 - English Roman Catholic priest who promoted the use of a vernacular Bible (partly his translation) and opposed monasticism, the papacy, and other Roman doctrines.
 - Founded the Lollards, a group who preached in the vernacular and generally followed Wycliffe’s beliefs. Like the Waldensians, they joined Protestantism during the Reformation.